

S O M E
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
D E A T H
O F T H E
Rev. Mr. FLETCHER,
VICAR OF MADELEY,
I N A
L E T T E R
T O T H E
R E V. J. W E S L E Y.

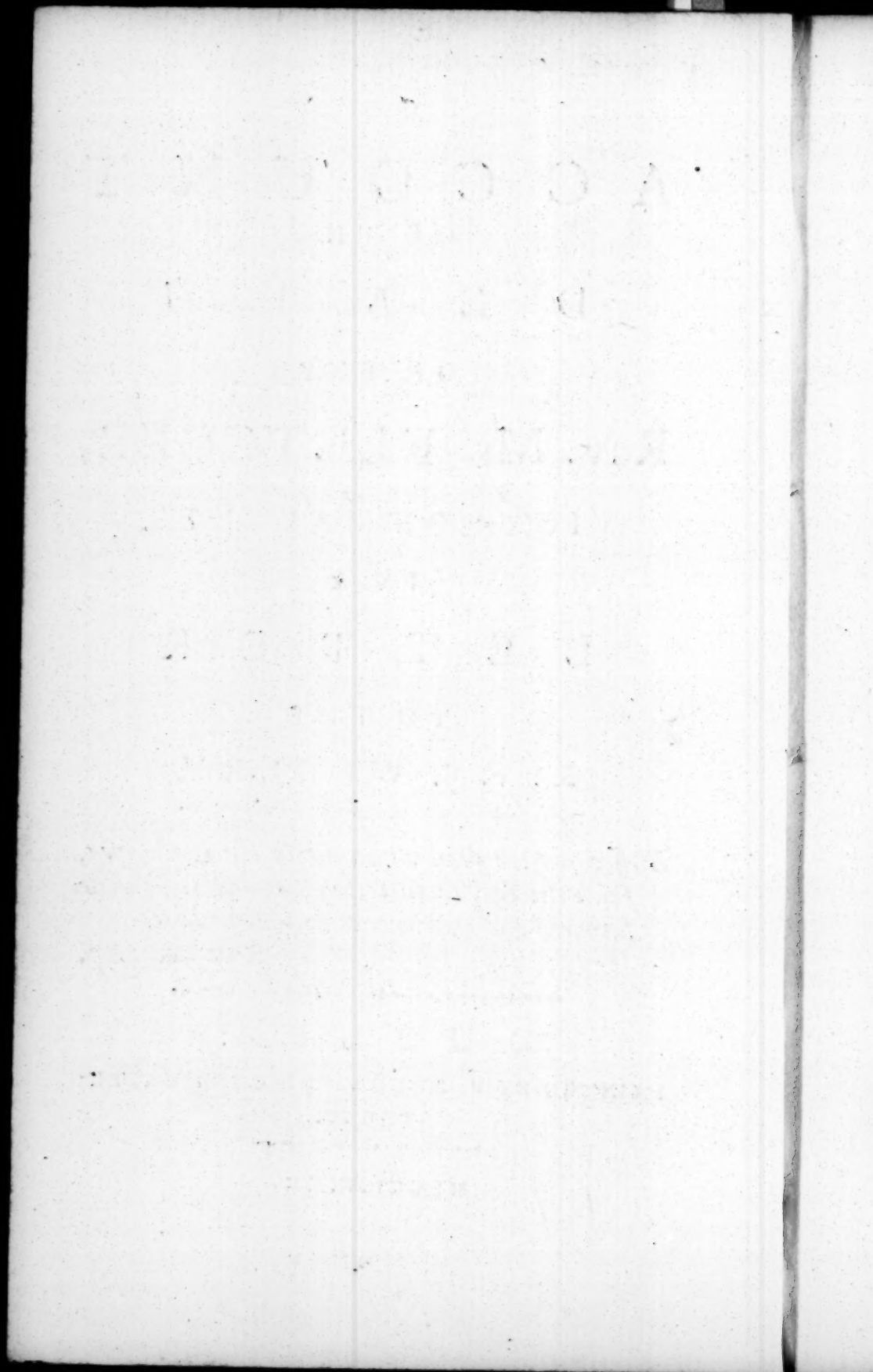
*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea,
saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their
labours, and their works do follow them.*

REV XIV. 13.

D U B L I N:

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MDCCLXXXV.



S O M E

A C C O U N T, &c.

To the REV. MR. WESLEY.

Rev. and very dear Sir,

August 18, 1785.

THOUGH but yesterday I parted with my beloved husband's remains, I must now endeavour to collect my wounded mind, as I would not have any of his words fall to the ground, and give if possible some account of this awful, but to him glorious scene.

Our union increased daily, as did his health and strength; his consumptive complaint appeared quite removed, and in my eyes the *bitterness of death was past*. The work was sweetly prospering, and in a variety of circumstances, the sun of prosperity shone around us.

For some time before this his last illness, his precious soul (always alive to God) was particularly penetrated with the nearness of eternity; there was scarce an hour in which

he was not calling upon me to drop every thought and every care that we might attend to nothing but drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling prayer for the fulness of the Spirit, and were led, in a very peculiar manner to an act of *abandonment* (as we called it) of our whole selves into the hands of God, to *do or suffer* whatever was pleasing to him. On Thursday, August 4, he was taken up in the work of God, from three in the afternoon, till nine at night; when he came home, he said, I have taken cold.—Friday and Saturday, he was poorly, though he went out part of the day, and seemed uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night his fever first appeared very strong.—I begged him not to go to church in the morning, but let a pious brother who was here preach in the yard; but he told me it was the will of the Lord, and that he was assured it was right he should go; in which case I never dared to persuade. As I was in the morning with a little company of our pious women, begged they would pray that he might be strengthened, and that I might have a grain of that faith which supported the faithful when their friends were martyred. In reading prayers he almost fainted away.—I got through the croud with a friend, and intreated him to come out of the desk, as did some others; but he let us know in his sweet manner, we were not to interrupt the order
of

of GOD. I then retired to my pew, where all around me were in tears. When he was a little refreshed by the windows being opened, and a nosegay thrown into the desk by a friend, he went on; and afterwards going up into the pulpit, preached with a strength and recollection which surprized us all.

In his first prayer, he said—“*LORD thou wilt manifest thy strength in weakness, we confer not with flesh and blood, but put our trust under the shadow of thy wings.*”

His text was from PSALM xxxvi. 6, 7. O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O GOD! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

After he had pointed out the SAVIOUR of mankind, and observed how some by sin had made themselves beasts, he shewed that the promise, even in that sense, might be applied to the sinner as well as to the beasts of the earth: and in speaking to these, with his usual earnestness, he *prest, invited, and intreated* them to return unto GOD, enforcing those words of our LORD when he came near to Jerusalem and wept over it—*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* These words peculi-

arly pierced the hearts of many, as they have since told me. He continued to observe in nearly the following words, "that the wings of the LORD, are compared to those of an eagle for strength and protection, Exodus xix. 4. *I bore you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself.* And to those of a hen for love and care, *Like as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.* In the Jewish tabernacle, where was the Holy of Holies, two cherubims were placed, whose extended wings joining together, overshadowed the mercy-seat; the face of one was like an ox, and the face of the other like a man;—the first represented by its strength, the power of God—the other CHRIST's humanity.—When he died upon the cross, his arms were stretched out, and these were the wings of love which he opened, and still holds wide open to receive all that come unto him; let us then when we see his love and power thus united to save and bless us, enter boldly into the holy of holies through the door of divine mercy. A friend threw *me* some flowers to revive me when I was faint, but the mercy of the LORD is far more reviving;—it is this I would hold out to you, and drop it into your very bosoms, may it sink deep there, *that you may taste and see how good the Lord is,* and confess that his saving mercy is above the richest perfume, *for he saves both man and beast*

After

After sermon he went up the aisle to the communion table, with these words, " I am going to throw myself under the wings of the cherubim before the mercy seat."

The congregation was large, and the service held till near two. Sometimes he could scarcely stand, and was often obliged to stop for want of power to speak. The people were deeply affected—weeping was on every side. Gracious LORD! how was it, that my soul was kept so calm in the midst of the most tender feelings. Notwithstanding his *extreme* weakness, he gave out several verses of hymns, and various lively sentences of exhortation. As soon as the service was over, we hurried him away to his bed, where he immediately fainted away. He afterwards dropt into a sleep for some time, and upon waking, cried out with a pleasant smile—" Now my dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the LORD's work, he never fails me *when I trust in him.*" After he got a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening—now and then waking (as was usual with him) full of the praises of God. That night his fever returned, but not so bad as on Saturday; nevertheless, from Sunday his strength decreased amazingly. On Monday and Tuesday, we had a little paradise together; he lay on a couch in the study, and was at times very restless, as to change of posture, but sweetly pleasant,

pleasant, and often slept for a good while. When awake, he delighted much in hearing me read hymns and tracts on faith and love. His words were all animating, and his patience beyond expression. When he had any bitter or nauseous medicine to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross, reminding me of a word he used often to repeat; that our business was to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God, and then leave him to give us what comfort he saw good. I asked him, if he should be taken from me, whether he had any particular directions or orders to give me, since I desired to form my whole life thereby. He replied, "No, not by *mine*, the HOLY GHOST shall direct thee; I have nothing to say, only that the LORD will open all before thee; but beware of such and such, and let not any one bring thee into bondage. If I stay with thee, I will keep thee from oppression, but if I should be taken from thee, beware of them." I said, hast thou any conviction the LORD is about to take thee.—He answered, "No, not in particular, only I always see death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the very verge of eternity." While he slept a little, I laid my trial before the LORD, intreating him, if it was his good pleasure, to spare my beloved husband a little longer; but my prayer seemed to have no wings, it was held down, and I could not help continually mingling therewith,

therewith, Lord give me perfect resignation : this uncertainty in my own mind, made me rather tremble, lest the *Lord* was going to take the bitter cup out of my dear's hand and give it unto me. The cup of separation, he had for some weeks before very deeply drank of, when I myself was ill of the fever. At that time, he often passed through the whole parting scene, and struggled for the fortitude of perfect resignation. Sometimes he would say at that season, " O Polly ! shall I ever
 " see the day, when thou must be carried out
 " to bury. How will the little things, thou
 " wast accustomed to use, and all those which
 " thy tender care has prepared for me in
 " every part of the house, how will they
 " wound and distress me ! How is it ? I think
 " I feel jealousy—I am jealous of the worm !
 " I seem to shrink at giving my dear Polly
 " to the worms."

Now all these reflections returned with a mill-stone's weight on my heart. I cried unto the LORD, and those words were deeply impressed on my spirit. *Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.* This promise was full of matter as well as unction to my soul. It explained itself thus—that in *Christ's* immediate presence was *our home*, and that we should find our reunion in being deeply centered in him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity.
 As

As such I still take and trust for ever to hold it. All that day, when ever I thought of this expression, *to behold thy glory*, it seemed *to wipe every tear away*, and was as the *ring* by which we were joined anew.

Awaking some time after, he said, "Polly, "I will tell you what I have been thinking of—it was Israel's fault that they asked for *signs*: we will not do so; but abandoning our whole selves into the hands of God, we will *there lie patiently* before him, assured *that he will do all things well.*"

My dear love, said I, if ever I have done or said any thing to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound my heart, shouldst thou be taken from me.

He intreated and charged me, with inexpressible tenderness, not to allow the thought; declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart, as with the adamantine pen of friendship deeply dipt in blood,

On Wednesday, after groaning all day, as it were under the weight of the power of God, he told me, he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of that word, "*God is love*," as he could never be able to tell. "It *fills* me," said he, "it *fills* me every moment."

“ ment. O Polly! my dear Polly! *God is*
 “ *love!* Shout, shout aloud—Oh! it fills
 “ me, I want a guilt of praise to go to the
 “ ends of the earth. But it seems as if I
 “ could not speak much longer; let us *fix on*
 “ *a sign* between ourselves,” (tapping me
 twice with his finger) “ now I mean,
 “ *God is love, and we will draw each other into*
 “ *God: Observe! by this we will draw each*
 “ *other into God.*”

Sally coming in, he cried out, “ O Sally!
 “ *God is love!* shout both of you;—I want to
 “ hear you shout his praise.” Indeed it was
 a season of love. All this time, the medical
 friend who attended him with unwearied dili-
 gence, hoped he was in no danger, he knew
 it to be the fever, but as he had no bad head-
 ach, much sleep without the *least delirium*, and
 an almost regular pulse, seldom much quicker
 than my own, he thought the symptoms a-
 mazingly kind; for though the disease was
 commissioned to take his life, yet it seemed
 so restrained by the power of God, that we
 truly discerned in it the verity of those words,
death is yours!

On Thursday, his speech began to fail.
 While he was able, he continued speaking to
 all who came in his way; accidentally hear-
 ing that a stranger was in the house, he or-
 dered her to be called up, though uttering
 two

two sentences almost made him faint. To his friendly doctor, he would not be silent while he had any power of speech; often saying, "O Sir, you take much thought for my body, give me leave to take thought for your soul." And I believe his words will remain with that friend for ever. When I could scarcely understand any thing he said, I spake these words, *God is love!* instantly he caught them, as if all his powers were awakened afresh, and broke out in rapture, "*God is love! Love! Love! O for that gust of praise I want to sound.*"—Here his dear voice again failed. He was restless and often suffered many ways, but with such patience, as none but those who were with him can conceive; If I named his sufferings—he would smile and make *the sign*.

On Friday, finding *his dear body* covered with spots, I so far understood them, as to feel a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his bed, with my hand in his, intreating the LORD to be with us in this tremendous hour, he strove, to say many things, but could not: pressing my hand and often repeating *the sign*, at last he breathed out, *Head of the church, be head to my wife.* When, for a few moments I was forced to leave him, to gather up some sheets of one of his manuscripts, which I feared would be lost.—Sally said to him, my dear master, do
you

you know *me*? He replied, " Sally—God
" will put his right hand under you." She
added, O my dear master, should you be
taken away, what a disconsolate creature will
my poor dear mistress be. He replied, *God*
will be her all in all.

He had always delighted much in those
words.

" Jesu's blood thro' earth and skies,
" Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries."

And whenever I repeated them to him, would
answer, *boundless! boundless! boundless!* and
in allusion to that, he now replied, though
with great difficulty,

" Mercy's *full* power I *soon* shall prove,
" Lov'd with an everlasting love."

On Saturday afternoon his fever seemed
quite off, and a few christian friends standing
near the bed, he reached his hand to each of
them, and looking on a minister, who was
weeping by him, he said, " are you ready
" to assist to-morrow?" which recollection of
his amazed us much, as the day of the
week had not been named in the room. Most
about him could not but believe he was bet-
ter, and would get over it. One said, do
you think that the LORD will raise you up?—
He strove to answer, saying, " raise us in

“ resurxxxx raise us in resurxxxx,” meaning in the resurrection. To another who asked the same question, he said, “ *I leave it all to God.*”

In the evening his fever returned, with violence, and the *Mucus* falling on the wind-pipe occasioned him to be almost strangled. He suffered greatly, and it was supposed, the same painful emotion would continue and grow more violent to the last. This I felt most *exquisitely*, and cried unto the Lord to remove it, and glory be to his name he did; and from that time it returned no more in that way. As night drew on, I thought I perceived him dying very fast; his fingers could now hardly move to make *the sign* (which he scarce ever forgot) and his speech, as it seemed was quite gone. I said, my dear creature, I ask not for myself, *I know thy soul*, but for the sake of others, if JESUS is very present with thee, lift thy right hand: he did. I added, if the prospect of glory sweetly opens before thee, repeat the sign. He then raised it again—and in half a minute a second time, then threw it up with all his remaining strength, as if he would reach the top of the bed. After this, his dear hands moved no more; but on my saying, “art thou in much pain?” he answered, *No*. From this time he entered into a state that might be called a kind of sleep, though with eyes open and
fixt,

fixt, and his hands utterly void of any motion. For the most part he sat upright against pillows, with his head a little inclined to one side, and so remarkably composed and triumphant was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarcely discernable in it.

Twenty-four hours, my dearly beloved was in this situation, breathing like a person in common-sleep.— About thirty-five minutes past ten on Sunday night, August 14th, his precious soul *entered into the joy of the Lord*, without one struggle or groan,—in the 56th year of his age.

Often he had said when hearing of happy deaths—well, let us get holy lives, and we will leave the rest to God—but I can truly say, who was scarce a minute at a time from him night or day, that there was the strongest reason to believe

“ No cloud did arise,

“ To darken his skies,

“ Or hide for a moment, his LORD from his eyes.”

And here, I break of my mournful story ;
I could say abundance more, but on my
bleeding heart his fair picture of heavenly
excellence will be for ever drawn —When I
call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious
endeavours.

endeavours to seek and save the lost—his diligence in the employment of his time—his Christlike condescension to me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven, I may be well allowed to add, my loss is beyond the power of words to paint. O Sir, you know I have trodden deep waters, but *all my afflictions were nothing compared to this*. Well; I want no pleasant prospect, but upwards—nor any thing whereon to fix my hope, but *immortality*.

On the 17th his dear remains were deposited in Madeley church-yard; amidst the tears and lamentations of thousands, who flocked about the bier of their dear pastor. Between the house and church they sung these verses:

With heavenly weapons he hath fought
The battles of the Lord;
Finish'd his course, and kept the faith,
And gain'd the great reward.

God hath laid up in heaven for him,
A crown which cannot fade;
The righteous Judge at that great day,
Shall place it on his head.

The service was performed by the Rev. Mr. HATTON, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom the Lord moved in a pathetic manner, to speak to his weeping flock on the sad occasion.

caſion. In the concluſion at my requeſt he read the following Paper.

AS it was the deſire of my beloved huſband to be buried in this plain manner, ſo out of tenderneſs he begged that I might not be preſent; and in all things I would obey him.

Permit me then to take this opportunity, by the mouth of a friend, to bear my open teſtimony to the glory of God, that I who have known him, in the moſt perfect manner, am conſtrained to declare, I never knew any one walk ſo cloſely in the ways of God as he did.—The Lord gave him a conſcience tender as the apple of an eye. He literally preferred the intereſt of every one to his own. He was rigidly juſt, but perfectly looſe from all attachments to the world. He ſhared *his all* with the poor, who lay ſo cloſe to his heart, that on the approach of death, though his ſpeech was ſo gone he could utter nothing without difficulty, he cried out, “*O my poor! what will become of my poor! I am dead to my poor!*”—He was bleſt with ſo great a degree of humility as is ſcarcely to be found—I am witneſs how often he has taken a real pleaſure in being treated with contempt; indeed it ſeemed the very food of his ſoul to be little and unknown. When he ſaid to me, “*thou wilt*
“ write

‘ write a line or two to my brother in Switzerland, if I die.’ I replying, my dear love, I will write him all the Lord’s dealings with thee.—“ No, no,” said he, “ Write nothing about me—I only desire to be forgotten—*God is all.*”

His zeal for souls I need not tell to *you*, let the labour of twenty-five years, and a martyrs death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts.—His diligent visitation of the sick, laid to appearance, the foundation of the spotted fever, which by God’s permission, tore him from you and me: and his vehement desire to take his last leave of *you*, with dying lips and hands, gave (it is supposed) the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction.—Thus hath he lived and died your servant—and *will any of you refuse to meet him at God’s right hand in that day?*

He walked with death always in sight, and about two months ago, he came to me and said, “ My dear love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression death is very near us, as if it would be some sudden stroke upon one of us, and it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be ready.” He then broke out, “ *Lord prepare the soul thou wilt call; and O stand by the poor disconsolate one who shall be left behind.*”

A few

A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner, saying to me.—“ I have had such a discovery of the depth of that word, *God is love!* as I cannot tell the half, but it *fills* me, it *fills* me, O Polly ! my dear Polly, *God is love!* shout his praise ; I want a *gust of praise to reach to the ends of the earth.*” And the same he testified as long as he had voice, and continued to testify to the end, by a most *Lamb-like patience*, in which he victoriously smiled over death, and set his last seal to those glorious truths he had so long preached among you.

Three years nine months and two days I have possessed my heavenly minded husband ; but now, the sun of my earthly joy is *set for ever set*, and my soul filled with an anguish, which only finds its consolation in a total *abandonment* and resignation to the will of God : an exercise to which my dear creature and I had of late been particularly drawn. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased to spare him to me a little longer, the following answer was impressed on my mind, with great power, and in the accomplishment of this word of promise, *I look for our reunion. Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.* Lord hasten the hour.

As

As the applications for some account of God's dealings with my beloved husband, were so numerous that I could not comply with them all, I have given the copy of this letter to be printed. I consider this also, as a debt I owe to his dear orphans of Madeley, to whom it is particularly address'd, and as it is probable I may be called away by the same fever, perhaps this may be the last office of love I can yield them.

If it should be a blessing to any, praised be the Lord; I ask in return their prayers, that the spirit which so abundantly rested on my dear departed husband, may in some degree be poured out on his poor disconsolate widow,

MARY FLETCHER.

1 **R**EJOICE for a brother deceas'd,
 Our loss is his infinite gain;
 A soul out of prison releas'd,
 And freed from his bodily chain;
 With wings let us follow the flight,
 And mount with his spirit above,
 Escap'd to the mansions of light,
 And lodg'd in the Eden of love.

2 Our brother the haven hath gain'd,
 Out-flying the tempest and wind,

His

His rest he hath sooner obtain'd,
 And left his companions behind ;
 Still tofs'd on a sea of distress,
 Hard toiling to make the blest shore,
 Where all is assurance and peace,
 And sorrow and sin are no more.

- 3 There all the ship's company meet,
 Who sail'd with the Saviour beneath,
 With shouting each other they greet,
 And triumph o'er trouble and death :
 The voyage of life's at an end,
 The mortal affliction is past,
 The age, that in heaven they spend,
 For ever and ever shall last.

- 1 **H**ARK, a voice divides the sky ;
 Happy are the faithful dead,
 In the Lord who sweetly die,
 They from all their toils are freed !
 Them the Spirit hath declar'd
 Blest, unutterably blest :
 Jesus is their great reward,
 Jesus is their endless rest.

- 2 Follow'd by their works they go,
 Where their head had gone before,
 Reconcil'd by grace below,
 Grace had open'd mercy's door :

Justify'd

Justify'd through faith alone,
 Here they knew their sins forgiv'n ;
 Here they laid their burden down,
 Hallow'd and made meet for heav'n.

3 Who can now lament the lot
 Of a saint in Christ deceas'd ?
 Let the world, who know us not,
 Call us hopeless and unblest ;
 When from flesh the spirit freed,
 Hastens homeward to return,
 Mortals cry, " A man is dead !"
 Angels sing, " A child is born !"

4 Born into the world above,
 They our happy brother greet,
 Bear him to the throne of love,
 Place him at the Saviour's feet :
 Jesus smiles, and says, " Well done
 " Good and faithful servant thou !
 " Enter, and receive thy crown,
 " Reign with me triumphant now !"

5 Angels catch th' approving sound,
 Bow and bless the just award ;
 Hail the heir with glory crown'd,
 Now rejoicing with his Lord :
 Fuller joys ordain'd to know,
 Waiting for the gen'ral doom,
 When th' archangel's trump shall blow,
 " Rise, ye dead, to judgment come "

HOSANNAH

- 1 **H**OSANNAH to God
In his highest abode;
All heaven be join'd,
To extol the Redeemer and friend of man-
kind!
He claims all our praise,
Who in infinite grace
Again hath stoop'd down
And caught up a worm to inherit a crown.
- 2 Our partner below,
Our brother in woe,
From his sorrow and pain
He hath call'd to the pleasures that always
remain:
He hath snatched him away
From a cottage of clay
To a kingdom above,
A kingdom of glory, and gladness, and love.
- 3 Our friend is restor'd
To the joy of his Lord,
With triumph departs,
But speaks by his death to our echoing hearts:
Follow after, He cries,
As he mounts to the skies,
Follow after your friend,
To the blissful enjoyments that never shall
end.

And

- 4 And shall we not press
To that harbour of peace,
That heavenly shore,
Where sorrow, and parting, and death are
no more :
Our brother pursue,
And fight our way through,
In the strength of our Lord
Follow on, till we seize the eternal reward ?

F I N I S.